

BoT PERFIN FORGERIES

The Saga Continues

By Dr Tam Llewellyn-Edwards

I had a great interest in John Nelson's article on this subject (Bulletin 330). It would seem that some BoT Perfins are indeed forgeries.

Although the forgers were not named nor brought to justice it now seems clear that some of these perfins are indeed forgeries and sadly forgeries produced by philatelists. However, this aspect of our hobby will never die and the controversy goes on. In his article, John Nelson asks which are the forgeries - and don't we all.

It is surprising that the discovery of the forgeries has not been disclosed before and it just goes to show how completely an accusation can be buried if those powerful enough want it buried.

There is no evidence in the Mack's Stamp Review article to help us identify the forged die, but we do have some circumstantial evidence. The forgery was produced sometime in the first years of the 20th century. There were a 'large' number of forgeries produced and they were (allegedly) produced by knowledgeable philatelists. The machine used to produce the forgeries was based on a design taken from a genuine perfin, and John Nelson suggests that the machine used was a single die machine.

This all leads me to suggest that the forged perfin is in fact the design we have previously listed as Die 2 (Small holes) and which has previously been considered genuine. A suggestion that this was a forged die has been made before - in the book "G.B. Official Perfins" and elsewhere, but it had generally been considered as a genuine die.

If Die 2 (Small holes) is a forgery it would satisfy the evidence above. It only appears on later issues (including a suspicious number of mint stamps), there are relatively large numbers of this forgery, and they are largely on 'correct' issues. I look forward to others adding to this evidence or refuting it.

What then of the host of other dies suspected as forgeries? Some of them may be examples of single die machines used officially by the Board, but others are, I am sure, forgeries. Some of these are well made and could well be officially produced dies (or even the forged die referred to in the Mack's Stamp Review article), but others are poorly produced and must surely be forgeries. Perhaps the knowledge of the production of forgeries, which seems to have been wide in philatelic circles encouraged others to try their hand at a little illicit perfinning.

I would not want to leave this article without giving a little ground for controversy so I will end with some facts that may point to the Die 2 (Small holes) being genuine. I must have seen a mint vertical strip of SG 271 with such even spacing that it must have been produced by a multi-headed machine, and like John Nelson, I cannot believe that the forgers would produce such an expensive machine when a cheaper single die machine would suffice. Also I have in my collection an unused example of SG 188 (which must be more valuable unperfinned), which appears to be Die 2 (Small holes). It has a British Association Expert Committee certificate as genuine. The certificate is dated 1958, which is after Capt. Jackson's original disclosure of the existence of fakes and after the Mack's Stamp Review article.

So if the forgery is not Die 1 (Small holes) which is the forged die? Based on the numbers that appear to be in circulation I would suggest either "GB Official Perfins" Type 1 or Type 3 (which are probably Nos 9 & 13 in Nelson's earlier articles in the Bulletin). However, both of these are known used on 'impossible' issues which the forgers, if they were philatelists, should have known to avoid.

I doubt we will ever get to the bottom of this but I would be delighted to hear what others think, and of any further evidence which may be lurking in the collections of others. For the time being I reserve my position until I have seen and evaluated everybody's additional evidence.